Intermodal Security Training Exercise Program (I-STEP)

Transportation Security Administration

TSA's Intermodal Security Training Exercise Program (I-STEP) is strengthening the nation's ability to prevent, respond to and recover from a transportation security incident within the nation's surface transportation sector.

I-STEP Goals

Our Nation's transportation sector networks are vital to the economic health of this country. I-STEP will provide surface transportation communities with meaningful evaluations of prevention of, preparedness for, and the ability to respond to terrorist-related incidents. I-STEP's goals include:

- promoting stakeholder awareness and involvement through an outreach program;
- encouraging stakeholder participation in program development;
- aligning with national standards and requirements;
- conducting exercises relevant to stakeholders' challenges and risks; and
- refining the program through evaluation and continuous improvement.

I-STEP offers an intermodal transportation-security exercise program for our nation's transportation sector network communities. The program aligns with the nation's infrastructure protection policies and programs.

Through outreach, we engage all modes of the intermodal transportation community to continuously improve security readiness. Our innovative and comprehensive system of tools and services will provide a foundation for stakeholders to strengthen their transportation-sector network security postures as they consider the economic impacts of a

transportation security incident (TSI) on affected industries and the movement of people and commerce.

I-STEP delivers the following exercise support documentation and services:

- Facilitation of all planning meetings and exercise activities;
- Objectives and scenarios that drive exercise discussion;
- Exercise plans that include scope, objectives, tasks and responsibilities;
- Situation manuals with sequenced scenarios or partially pre-scripted narratives;
- Handbooks with controller and evaluator roles and responsibilities;
- Exercise evaluation guides for evaluators to record their observations, with after-exercise questions;
- Master Scenario Events Lists with chronology of the events;
- Media/Public Information Kits to guide notification of local media prior to the exercise; and
- Logistics Plans for a seamless exercise.

Exercise Scope

I-STEP improves the intermodal transportation industry's ability to prepare for and respond to TSIs by increasing awareness, improving processes, creating partnerships, and delivering transportation-sector network security training exercises. I-STEP provides security-exercise tools and services to modal operators through TSA general managers. The tools include software for exercise design, evaluation and tracking for a mix of tabletop, advanced tabletop and functional exercises.

Program Team

The I-STEP program team provides strategic support, planning, analytical and technical services, exercise mechanics, and transportation security training exercises. The team includes government employees and contractors with significant expertise in the transportation domain and in exercise program development and delivery. Federal Government participants include: DHS entities TSA, U.S. Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency; as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Stakeholder Involvement

The participation of stakeholders in the design and execution of I-STEP is critical to successful exercise preparation and execution. The program increases the awareness by the intermodal transportation security community of the critical processes, issues and activities that arise during and after a TSI.

In addition, the program fosters and supports institutional relationships within the port environment including the transportation industry, transportation security managers, emergency managers, law enforcement, medical professionals, media, and security personnel, and all others involved in preventing, preparing for and responding to an incident. Modal operators are encouraged to consider whether participation satisfies their internal-exercise obligations.

Information Technology

The Exercise Information System (EXIS) is an Internet-accessible knowledge-management system serving all stakeholders – industry, port authorities, federal agencies, and state and local governments – and integrating all I-STEP components at the sensitive security information level. It gives stakeholders valuable exercise information tailored to the transportation industry, and gives developers best practices and past work for use in future exercises. With EXIS, transportation industry stakeholders can choose scenarios and objectives based on their particular needs, such as their transportation modes, or their regulated areas of operation.

All exercise elements can be customized and saved. The EXIS is adaptable to changing exercise, tracking and reporting needs as they mature and can support the addition of future exercise elements.

The I-STEP program team has designed and field tested the Exercise Evaluation System (EES) as a supplemental tool for exercise evaluation and immediate feedback. EES assists evaluators with "plan paths," expected outcomes and how to document deviations from the security plan and results.

The tool provides correlation of notes and data captured during the exercise with a time/date stamp. The tool is designed to give immediate feedback for the debrief. All hand-written objective specific notes are attached to each objective with the option to convert to text. The Evaluation Director is able to correlate multiple objectives from multiple evaluators and sites electronically to develop the After Action Report.

Background

TSA, in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), developed the Port Security Training Exercise Program (PortSTEP) as a joint program to help meet the mandates of the 2002 Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA). PortSTEP was a pilot program for the development of I-STEP within TSA's Transportation Sector Network Management (TSNM).

I-STEP uses the most effective PortSTEP elements, processes and procedures. It capitalizes on the PortSTEP-exercise experiences to provide the right combination of tools and exercise types for participants. And like PortSTEP, I-STEP joins federal, state, local-government and private industry stakeholders – at the intersection of transportation sector networks – to enhance security and validate security plans and procedures.

For additional information, please contact:

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